



3700 SW Murray Blvd.
Suite 190
Beaverton, OR 97005
Phone: (503) 643-5437
Fax: (503) 846-5793

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EXHIBIT 6

City of Beaverton
Planning Commission
PO Box 4755
Beaverton OR 97076-4755

RE: Draft Housing Element / Beaverton Comprehensive Plan

Dear Planning Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Housing Element. Having participated in the work group established for the purpose of updating this portion of the Comprehensive Plan, I know that staff and consultants worked hard to gather and analyze data about existing conditions, anticipated growth, and what tools might be needed to guide the City towards its desired future form.

As the document that will ultimately become the basis for all land use decisions and the guiding force behind public infrastructure investments, this chapter makes a critical policy statement—it is the road map by which you will assess whether you are headed in the right direction. I appreciate the incorporation of major themes—livability, equity, sustainability, and resiliency, as “guideposts related to Beaverton’s unique aspirations and values,” as further reflected in the Civic and Vision Plans, and a variety of more specific area plans (such as Old Town, Creekside, and South Cooper Mountain).

Many more detailed reports were compiled and informed the development of this Housing chapter. One of the most critical was the Housing Strategies Report, which addresses population and household growth, and trends related to age, race and ethnicity, income, employment, housing stock, condition and tenure.

Of greatest interest to me was the sheer magnitude of the problem at the lowest end of the rental market—for low-wage workers, and seniors and the disabled who live on fixed incomes. Lower income households simply do not have affordable housing options in Beaverton, with **over 7,000 units needed at rents at or below about \$620 monthly!**

The report shows a surplus of units at higher rent levels, and overall land capacity sufficient to meet the need for the overall number of new rental units. But it is clear that today’s runaway real estate market is only exacerbating this problem at the lower end of the market (with displacement occurring regularly based on property sales, renovations, and rapidly escalating rents). As calls to City Hall would indicate, renters displaced in today’s marketplace truly have nowhere to turn.

www.thecommunityhousingfund.org

There is no capacity—whether from public, nonprofit or private developers—to begin to close this huge affordability gap without additional resources and support from the City of Beaverton (in combination with other levels of government). Subsidies and incentives are the only way to get below-market rents, which is what is clearly needed, and at historically significant levels. Some of these specific tools and incentives were included in earlier drafts of the Housing Element, and add value to your discussion. Without them, it is difficult to imagine making headway on the 7,000 unit deficit.

Among the specific tools and incentives mentioned in earlier drafts of this chapter were: continued support of tax exemption for nonprofit affordable housing, land acquisition/contributions, density bonuses, SDC or other fee reductions, deferrals or waivers, development permitting assistance, potential for City housing trust fund or land bank, encouragement of employer assisted housing, work with statewide coalition to allow local option around inclusionary zoning, and use of General Fund and URA funds to help reduce cost of building new housing.

While it is, of course, still possible to pursue any of these tools in order to address the critical housing needs you have outlined, noting a number of them in the plan gives you a check point against which to measure real progress. If no additional tools are employed, it seems quite likely the deficit at the lower end will only continue to grow. Households who are stretched beyond their means do not help ensure the diverse, inclusive and thriving community, that Beaverton aspires to maintain.

As the director of the Community Housing Fund, I would like to thank the City of Beaverton for the leadership role you have played in affordable housing. Your contributions to CHF have played a critical role in establishing a revolving loan fund which has helped seed over twenty-five affordable developments over the past decade.

But we must continue to work together on additional strategies. Thousands of current and future Beaverton residents are depending on us to do that hard work, to help close the gap so that more working families and individuals on fixed incomes can pay the rent, but also have food, heat, and medications. Having an adequate supply of safe and affordable homes is critical to virtually all of the other success measures you've laid out for the City. We look forward to our continued work together as you turn the page on this new housing chapter for the Comprehensive Plan.

Sincerely,



Sheila Greenlaw-Fink